

Design English : Collaboration and presentation across the curriculum

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カリキュラムを横断した各専門分野協同によるプレゼンテーション

Design English: Collaboration and presentation across the curriculum

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本稿では、静岡文化芸術大学デザイン学部上級生の英語能力、特にプレゼンテーション能力向上のためのプロジェクトについて述べる。このプロジェクトは、デザイン学部生産造形学科と文化政策学部国際文化学科 English Diploma Course (以下、EDC) の学生による協働プログラムである。これは継続的プロジェクトであるが、ここでは最初の二つの段階について報告する。まずコラボレーションの理論的根拠(意義)を述べ、2011年と2012年の実施の詳細について解説する。このプロジェクトでは、デザイン学部生とEDCの学生がチームを組んで製品提案のプレゼンテーションを作成し、最終的にデザイン学部生が英語によるプレゼンテーションを行った。本稿では、両学部学生が何を経験し何を得たかについて述べ、このプロジェクトに対する学生の評価についても言及する。そして、従来のカリキュラムの枠組みを超えた専門分野協同による教育について、初期段階の検証を今後のプログラム研究に反映させて、中長期的な目標を提案する。

This report describes the first two stages of a multi-stage project to improve the English skills, in particular the English presentation ability, of upperclassmen in the Faculty of Design at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC). The project is a collaborative effort between students in the Department of Industrial Design and the English Diploma Course (EDC) at SUAC. After explaining the rationale for the collaboration, details will be provided about how the project was implemented in 2011 and 2012. The endeavor involved Faculty of Design majors and EDC students working in teams to produce an English presentation of a product or product concept. The design students ultimately delivered the presentations in English. This report will describe the educational experiences and benefits received by students in both faculties. Furthermore, students' perceptions of the project will be provided. Following a reflection on the progress of the early stages of this cross-disciplinary educational experiment, mid- and long-term goals will be explained.

Introduction

Many Faculty of Design professors come to SUAC from real-world backgrounds and, as a result, know how essential good English skills are to a successful career in the design field. Despite this realization arrived at from first-hand experience by design faculty, some design majors at SUAC have yet to become fully aware of the role that English may play in their future careers. In fact, many incoming freshmen in the Faculty of Design view English as an obstacle or a burden that is best overcome as quickly as possible. As a result of this view of English, many design students enroll in English communication courses in their first year, complete their foreign language requirements and have no other contact with English during their time at SUAC. These educational conditions are unfortunate and deprive students of many

opportunities to not only see the relevance of English to their field of studies, but also to get practical English training as upperclassmen that may either help them in job placement, or inspire them to become internationally-minded designers. The aforementioned situation was the impetus for the project described in this report. The project endeavors to give Department of Industrial Design upperclassmen an opportunity to improve their English skills, specifically presentation skills, in the context of a design course. The collaboration with the English Diploma Course students was designed to be mutually beneficial to both faculties: Design and Cultural Policy and Management. Students in the English Diploma Course are generally recognized as the most proficient and motivated English-speaking students at SUAC; nonetheless, much of their study is classroom-based and academic.

It was thought that giving the Department of Industrial Design students a chance to explain and refine their product concept while giving English Diploma Course students an opportunity to work with future design professionals on a real-world design project would be beneficial for all concerned. By recognizing areas for improvement in both faculties, it was hoped that the two sides could complement one another. The project is currently in its second year and has accomplished a number of short-term goals. After demonstrating these successes and explaining the activities that took place in the first two years, hereinafter referred to as the first stage and the second stage respectively, some of the long-term goals will be presented.

Design and EDC Collaboration: The first stage

The first stage of the Design and EDC collaboration began in the Spring semester of 2011 with nine students from the Department of Industrial Design and twenty one EDC students participating. In addition to helping the future professional designers gain skills in presenting their ideas in English, another goal of the first stage was to promote an awareness of global issues. Therefore, the design instructor chose the theme of food-related global issues. For the first eight weeks of the semester, design students worked on developing their product concepts and prototypes with the guidance and support of their instructor. The collaboration really began in the ninth week of the semester when the two groups of students actually came together for the first time. On the first week of the collaboration, each design student did a trial run of his or her presentation in Japanese. Instructors then paired off one design student with two or three EDC students based partially on the results of a survey asking EDC students which product they found most interesting. Weeks two and three of the collaboration were devoted to a workshop in which students worked together to refine what is now becoming their joint presentation. The mutual benefits of the collaborative nature of the project really start to show themselves during this part of the semester. The EDC students play a valuable role by asking detailed, probing questions which often require the design students to think more deeply about their product and how to best communicate their concept (see Figure 1). The EDC students also benefit greatly both by being exposed to the process designers go through when developing and refining a

concept and by experiencing firsthand the level of professionalism expected of budding professional designers. Both design and EDC students also profit by gaining a greater awareness of the practical matters involved in tackling challenging global issues related to food and poverty. Based on discussions during the two weeks of concept refining workshops the collaborating students also begin to think about how to best communicate the product concept in English. Weeks four and five of the collaboration are devoted to rendering both the design student's presentation and their slides into English. This stage can be deceptively challenging for students as they come to realize they cannot simply directly translate the presentation and slide text from Japanese to English. This stage also requires diligence from instructors in stressing repeatedly that the final English product cannot just simply be a mirror translation of the original Japanese text. Cultural factors and differences in discourse styles between Japanese and English communication styles must sometimes be explained and taken into consideration as the presentation takes shape in English. Fortunately, good collaborative working relationships usually have been developed by this stage allowing the groups to overcome any stress or philosophical disagreements about how to best express concepts both in grammatically correct and natural sounding English. The penultimate week of the collaboration was devoted to a rehearsal for the final presentation. At this stage, the design student is no longer presenting by themselves; they are joined on stage and assisted by their EDC peers whose names are now deservedly on the slide presentation. This rehearsal stage is a chance to fine-tune presentation language, work out any timing issues, correct any spelling errors on slides, and practice fielding questions. The final presentation of the collaboration was



Figure 1. English workshop to refine presentations

publicized and made open to SUAC faculty, staff, and students; it was well attended by Faculty of Design instructors, administrative staff, and Department of International Culture instructors. The hard work put in during the previous weeks paid off as design students and their EDC partners made polished, well-prepared presentations and successfully fielded sometimes challenging questions in English from Department of Design instructors without hardly missing a beat (see Figure 2). The sense of accomplishment expressed by virtually all participants upon completion of the first stage of the Design English collaboration was gratifying for instructors to see. After all, being able to see groups of students set challenging goals and devote many hours of hard work to achieve them is one of the reasons that many people become teachers. The success of the first stage of the collaboration was confirmed by the results of a course survey asking students for their responses to a number of questions about the course (see Figure 3). Responses were overwhelmingly positive, particularly to questions asking students if they found the collaboration beneficial and if they had developed a greater awareness for global issues. Further encouraging feedback came from a few graduating fourth-year EDC students who stated that the Design and EDC collaboration was the most rewarding educational experience they'd had in their entire career at SUAC. The uniformly positive experience of the first stage of the Design and EDC collaboration left everyone involved excited about expanding and developing the program even further in 2012. The next section of this paper will explain the second stage of the collaboration program and how this even more ambitious stage in the ongoing Design and EDC collaboration was managed.

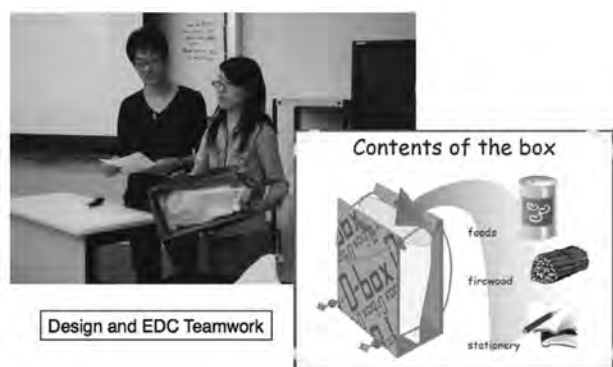


Figure 2. Delivering English presentations

Design and EDC Collaboration: The Second stage

The success of the first stage of this project allowed the founding members to expand its scope, add additional goals, and get official support from SUAC. Improvements at the second stage of this collaboration included adding more members to the team: Ikuro MINE from Department of Industrial Design, Satoshi KOSE from Department of Space and Architecture, and Kaori SUGIURA from the Department of International Culture. A special research grant was received from SUAC to allow the six-member team to continue managing the project, to write and publish a Design English textbook, and explore the possibilities of establishing relationships with design schools abroad. The relationships may entail either having design students study abroad, or arranging an online component so that students can participate in virtual lessons and discussions with students and teachers from design faculties abroad without having to leave Japan. The aforementioned plans are slated for the latter stages of the project. In the meantime, other innovative improvements were implemented in 2012.

The popularity of the collaboration in the first stage caused an increase in the number of design students interested in participating in 2012. This increase in participants was managed more easily due to the addition of Professor MINE to the team. Nonetheless, an increase in design students resulted in a shift in the balance between design students and EDC students. Consideration of student balance will be given when future classes are planned. Needless to say, ongoing adjustments to the project will be implemented to

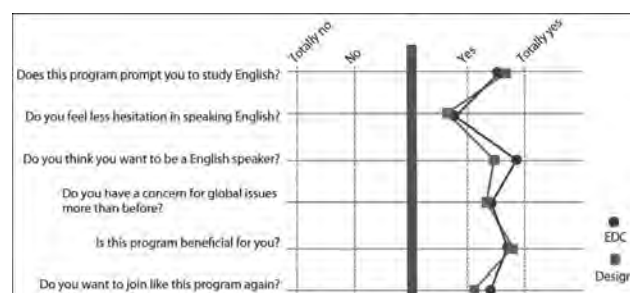


Figure 3. Positive survey results from the first stage of the collaboration

suit the needs of the students and project goals.

Two significant changes to the project from stage one to stage two involved having all students present their products to the class in English one time, and having some teams chosen for a second presentation. The large number of students in 2012 resulted in the need to schedule presentations over two days. After the initial presentations, six teams were selected to present again during exam week at the end of the semester. This second chance to present would allow the teams to revise their work and be more polished presenters. This was a significant consideration given the fact that two foreign guest designers, one from Denmark and one from France, were invited to be audience members and give advice to the students.

Perhaps the most exciting new feature of this collaboration was the inclusion of the two foreign designers as audience members during the final presentation. After the select group of students presented their projects in English, the guest designers from Yamaha Music gave students advice on their products and presentations and later participated in a discussion and Q&A session. The benefits of this experience to both teachers and students alike were immense. From an educational perspective, students were able to get real-world information and advice from experts in the field; they were also able to see excellent language learner role models because both guests were not native speakers of English, yet were fluent speakers and adept at communicating their ideas in their second language. Furthermore, students were able to learn about the design business from young professionals quite close in age to themselves. Cross-cultural exchanges also took place regarding our special guests' experiences living and working in Japan. Having successfully completed two years of the Design and EDC collaboration, it is an ideal time to reflect on what has been accomplished in this short time, and also to think ahead toward what can be done in the future.

Design and EDC Collaboration: The next stages

The first steps toward improving the English educational experience for design majors at SUAC have been described above. The next stages in the project will be outlined in this section. As alluded to above, special research funds

have been provided for the team to write and publish a Design English textbook. Two years of collaborative classroom experience has given the instructors a good idea of the types of language necessary to develop and refine a presentation. The two foreign guest designers who participated in the second stage final presentation as audience members also gave valuable, practical feedback that can be incorporated into the textbook. Design instructors have a clear and well-organized framework within which they have their students work to develop and realize concepts. This framework will constitute the foundation of the Design English textbook within which the body will be filled in. Once the structure of the textbook is finalized and an English corpus of design terms and transactional language is created, the team will work together to begin organizing and ordering the content and learning tasks. It is envisioned that the design textbook will allow students to work from a starting point to create a professional presentation and a physical prototype entirely in English.

In addition to the design textbook, another exciting part of this ongoing collaboration is the goal of establishing relationships with design schools abroad. Team members are currently researching a number of universities in various countries to find schools that best meet the needs of SUAC design students and to which SUAC students could contribute to most productively. Our hope is that the relationships will entail either having design students study abroad, or arranging an online component so that SUAC students can participate in virtual lessons and discussions with students and teachers from far away without having to leave Japan. Exposure to design instructors and students overseas may provide a creative and intellectual stimulus to SUAC design students that would be sure to aid their growth and development, and increase their motivation to study English.

Conclusion

Having successfully completed two years of the Design and EDC collaboration, it is an ideal time to reflect on what has been accomplished in this short span, and also to think ahead toward what can be done in the future. What became quite obvious from this collaboration is that it takes a team of diverse people from all areas of expertise to ensure success for a project of such ambition and uncharted territory. The steps taken to

accomplish the project goals included first giving instruction to design students and EDC students separately in their area of specialization. Secondly, students were brought together in teams so they could share their expertise and learn from one another and their instructors. Finally, design students were given the opportunity, with the support of their EDC counterparts, to present their products or product concepts in English. Further measures were taken to expose students to ideas and language of English-speaking design professionals. All of these measures have already

combined to succeed in being mutually beneficial and expanding the horizons of both design and EDC students. The collaboration project will continue as the dynamic individuals of the team synthesize their talents and work together to complete the English design textbook and forge links with universities overseas. The authors of this report hope that their work will inspire other members of the SUAC community to work on cross-disciplinary projects that make use of the special talents of SUAC teachers and students.

